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FELLOWSHIP PAPERS

# A More Excellent Way

RUFUS M. JONES

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A New Internationalism, by William I. Hull, Ph.D. Ready January, 1917.

The Seeds of War in the Social Order, by Rev. Willard L. Sperry. Ready December, 1916.

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Can Prayer Accomplish Anything Apart from the Man Who Prays? by Edward I. Bosworth, D.D. Ready October, 1916.

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# A More Excellent Way

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After nineteen hundred years of Christian profession all Christendom today stands reproached by the tragic evidences of its failure to establish Christian practice. The war is not simply proclaiming the violation of Christian principles between nations. It is laying bare the heart of twentieth century civilization and is disclosing widespread disregard of Christian standards in sordid commercialism, industrial strife, and social injustice. In the events of the present time there are compelling reasons why the Christian conscience should be quickened to penitence and roused to discover what deep-seated misconception of the personality and principles of Christ or what fatal facility for compromise has been responsible for the failure to make His will effective in the social order.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation unites a group of Christian seekers for a better way of life. It is founded in the faith that love as revealed in the life, teachings, and death of Jesus Christ is not only the fundamental basis of a true human society, but the effective power for overcoming evil, and that loyalty to humanity and to Christ calls His followers to new endeavors to practice love unswervingly at whatever cost, and to make it supreme in personal, social, industrial, national, and international life.

Fellowship Papers are issued in the hope that they may stimulate thought and action with regard to practical applications of these principles. They are not to be understood, however, as necessarily expressing the views of all the members of the Fellowship. While it is hoped to preserve throughout the series the same general approach, the individual authors are alone responsible for the statements contained in their respective Papers.

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# A MORE EXCELLENT WAY

We live in a strangely altered world. As by a flash of lightning from a thunder cloud the European war has revealed to us the moral confusion and disorder that lie concealed in a civilization heavily weighted with materialistic aims. As a man is awakened out of sleep, we have been awakened by this vast tragedy and we suddenly see how inadequate for the higher life of men and of society and of nations are the basic principles by which the civilized world has been trying to live. By facts and experiences that have burned themselves into our consciousness we are forced to discover a truer and more adequate moral basis for the world that is to emerge out of this present catastrophe. The constructive task laid upon our generation calls for something more than diplomacy and statesmanship. It calls for a re-discovery of the spiritual energies that construct the world. The new order of things which we hope and pray may rise out of the wreck of the old civiliza-

tion, which is now being ground in the awful millstones of war, can come forth into life and power only through the operation of positive spiritual forces on a greater scale than has ever been known before.

These new energies of life are to be found in the primitive Christian gospel, taken seriously and practically as a way of life and action. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not for Utopia—some dream land built out of sheer imagination—but for this mixed world of ours. We have no way of knowing what other worlds are like. We search in vain for the scenery and conditions of life beyond our sphere of time and space. What we do possess is a luminous account of the laws and conditions that underlie and determine complete and perfect human life in this world where we are.

The gospel presents first of all an actual instance of a perfect personal life. When we go back to the head-waters of Christianity we come not to a metaphysical theory, or a theological dogma, or a capricious fancy constructed out of exuberant hopes—we come to a personal exhibition of divine Life revealed in human life, the eternal in the midst of time. We come to

One who felt in His own consciousness union of mind and heart and will with God, and who was at the same time so truly of our nature that we see in Him, as we see nowhere else, the goal and type of complete normal, spiritual life.

The gospel is primarily a Person. It is not a code, it is a Life. It is not a system, it is an Incarnation. It is not a body of commands, it is the warm and intimate appeal of a Person who has felt and known the mystery and tragedy of this strange struggle of ours and who through it all has triumphed. It is not a magical way of escape from pain and vicissitude, it is the personal inspiration of One who can say, in quiet simplicity, "I am the Truth," "I am the Life," "I am the Way," "I am the Door." *This* is the innermost gospel—the gospel within the gospel—this harmonized Will, this completely adjusted Person who shows us for once Life as it ought to be.

In close and intimate conjunction with this innermost gospel there is a no less amazing and wonderful gospel-strand, dealing with the possibilities and implications of our own human life. Its diagnosis of human nature as it is now is tremendously searching

and its account is grave and sober: There is something radically wrong within. Man's nature carries in it a hampering element that tends to spoil the life. There is a serious taint in the stuff, a twist in the fiber, a weakness in the grain. Man does not do what he is meant to do. He does not follow his wisdom. He misses the mark, he goes astray, he gets *lost*. But in spite of this elemental fact of nature, which all human experience verifies and the common consciousness of the race acknowledges, the gospel is exceedingly optimistic about man. There are no set limits to his possibilities. There is no known terminus to his destiny. There is no fixed stopping place for his potential personality. This gospel uses breathlessly bold words of prophecy about us. "You are," it says, "to be perfect even as your Father is perfect." "You are to learn how to forgive even as your Father in heaven forgives." "You are to love," this perfect Lover of men tells us, "even as I have loved you." "All things are possible for him who believeth." "Greater things than these which you have seen me do shall you do."

This high expectation is not due to blind

enthusiastic hope. It is deeply and solidly based, as everything in the gospel is based, on the fundamental nature of man's soul and on the inexhaustible resources of the God who is here revealed. The spiritual transformations, which are the matters of real importance in the history of Christianity, are not in violation of the laws of the universe; they exhibit and illustrate the essential laws of life. The highest spiritual experiences, the supreme beatitudes of religion, all attach inevitably and inherently to the nature of life. As we go up in the scale we do not leave laws behind and go to a vacuum region beyond laws; we rather come under the operation of higher laws and enter upon a region where new and unexpected forces and energies come into play. The most wonderful thing about the gospel is its proclamation, its impressive revelation of these higher laws and forces and energies. The amazing faith in the possibilities of men, and all the astonishing expectations that are crowded into the gospel have their ground in a new and deeper knowledge of those regions and levels of life that had not been explored and charted before. We are dealing here with a fresh invasion of life

and with a corresponding revelation of its fundamental laws and principles. So many things project and stand out and call for comment in this revelation of life that it is not easy to select the transcendently important features. But there are two peaks of truth that show forth in peculiar splendor and dominance: (1) *The redemptive or conquering power of love;* (2) *The irresistible expansion of the Kingdom of God.*

Christ was not the first to proclaim the redemptive power of love. There were flashes and gleams of its discovery as a principle of life not only in Hosea, and in "the suffering servant" chapters of Isaiah, but also in Euripides and Plato, in the stories of the Buddha and in the highest reaches of almost all pre-christian literature. Christ brought it from the dim light of dawn to full sunrise radiance. He raised it to its $n^{th}$ power as a law and way of life. At no point of His teaching or of His practice did He strike across and reverse popular opinion more completely than in His enunciation and exhibition of this sacrificial and redemptive law of life. The people about Him all expected a Messiah who would be a world-ruler, a greater

David, a breaker of the oppressor's yoke, a mighty "restorer of the kingdom of Israel." He would be, in His own power, "the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof." Every sign of the possession of magical power rallied the multitude to Him. They were ready to shout "Hosanna" the moment they were convinced that their strong deliverer had come.

He finally disappointed their hopes. He persistently refused to follow the lines of popular expectation. The jeer of the mob shows why they lost faith in Him: "He saved others, Himself He could not save." But there is no better statement of the central principle of life than that. Repeatedly it came from His own lips in the paradoxical words of His teaching: "He that saves himself loses himself, and he that loses himself finds himself." It was His purpose, not to change the map of the world, not to set up one king in place of another, not to shift the capital from one hill to another, not to inaugurate a new political empire for an old one—it was His purpose to create a society of persons, liberated from their old nature by a fresh discovery of God, shrinking from sin and abhorring it, because they had

found the divine meaning of life, throbbing with joy because a new world and new dimensions of being had opened out on their vision, living no longer by rivalry and competition, but living by love and its contagious power.

There is only one way to produce that kind of a society. It does not come by command. It cannot be created by act of legislature or by sovereign edict. No force of battalions can compel it. It can come only by spiritual processes. The way to create a society like that is to begin by exhibiting it in a life that incarnates and embodies it. The only way to produce love as an operative force of life is to trust love completely—and to *love* regardless of all cost. The only way to reveal the nature of God as love and to carry it as a constructive force into the tissues of the social world is to translate it into the vital stuff of actual life, to make it visible and vocal. The only way to break the drift of sin and the instinctive drive of selfishness is to kindle a new and higher passion and to set a new attraction at work.

Just this Christ did, and He did it in such a way that it comes to light, not merely as

the highest law of life for earth, but as the essential nature of the divine character as well.

There is a striking verse in Mark's narrative (Mark x. 32) which is a crucial passage for understanding the unfolding of Christ's purpose: "And they were on their way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going on before; and they were amazed; and they that followed were afraid." This is not a chance item in an itinerary. It is a crisis of consciousness, a watershed moment in a life-purpose. Until then the stress had been on proclamation; He had been a teacher. He had dwelt upon great ideas, presented with new perspective, new illustrations, and new authority. Men listened to His message, were aroused by its novelty and freshness. They approved of His words. They hailed with joy the good news of unexpected privileges. But they remained entrenched in selfishness. The Pharisees made no new adjustment to fit the message. Even His simple Galilean friends, with all their enthusiasm, were still fast bound in habit and instinct and selfish desires. They saw a better life, but they were not ready to pay the price for it. The old diseases of nature and society were

eating away at the heart of life. Something more must be tried, some greater dynamic must be discovered, some other force must be brought into operation, a new step must be ventured. He must make the last and greatest appeal within a person's gift and power. He must be ready to go the whole way. He must eliminate all secondary considerations, all thought of self, all expedient and utilitarian methods and stake everything on the uttermost appeal of love. Calvary is the answer.

The world, with its crude theories and its arid metaphysical theologies, has wrapped this central fact of spiritual history round with its own clumsy coverings, but again and again the warm, tender, vital truth, with its liberating and inspiring power, has burst open the veils that cover it and has broken in like a newly risen sun and wakened men out of their sleep, made their selfishness seem abhorrent and the way of love seem the only way of life. The greatest of the spiritual awakenings down through the centuries of Christian history have come as a result of the re-discovery of the power of love as revealed in Jesus Christ, the fresh recovery of the living fact,

the unveiled vision of One who loved men and without any reserve gave Himself for them—of One who absolutely trusted love to redeem and to conquer.

This way of life—the way which He exhibited and raised to its full glory—*is* the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is not primarily a *post mortem* state, it is not a thing of geography, it is not a political achievement, it is not a millennial dream. It is a way of living. It is a spirit, a disposition, a rightly fashioned will. It is a settled, tested, unqualified confidence in love and a practice of it as a way of life. The Kingdom *has come* in its essential meaning as soon as there is one person in the world who has attained the Abba-crying experience, the certainty of the Father-son relationship with God, and who has added to this upward relationship of love to God the outward reaching attitude of love to all men—the relationship of brothers. But on the other hand the Kingdom is the total divine task and consummation of the ages. It is the unending continuation of the work of creation, the making of man. So long as men are still selfish, so long as human relationships re-

main untransformed by love, so long as there are social evils to be eradicated, the Kingdom will not have fully come. In fact no earthly achievement, no temporal stage, can completely express the full idea of the Kingdom, for it includes in its entire meaning both the visible and the invisible, the temporal and the eternal triumph of the spiritual purpose of God.

The Kingdom expands as fast as this contagion of love, awakened by the perfect incarnation of it, conquers men's hearts and carries them into this way of life. It does not come by "observation." It is not a spectacle to behold. It is not an event of date or locality. It is coming now. It is coming always. A Russian student who refused to serve in the army, because he believed war to be contrary to the Kingdom of God, was told by his commander that his "idea" was right, but that the Kingdom had not come yet. "No, sire," the student answered, "it may not have come to you, but it has come to me." The great spiritual question for any man is, how seriously he takes this way of life, how far he is ready to go with Christ, how completely he trusts love as a method, how determined he is to

back his "idea" with his life and all he holds dear.

This double fellowship of love, a love that joins one's life in joyous union with God as Father and that binds the same life into self-giving social relationship with a world of brothers—this conjunct life is the Kingdom of God. It has not come yet for the whole world. It is only in its dawning stage. There are large areas of darkness left. There are terrible moral diseases still unhealed. There are great stretches of jungle which the organizing forces of love have not yet conquered. Marks of moral imperfection mar both the individual life and the social system. The goal is still far away and there is yet much travail and tragedy to be endured. But there are persons living now for whom, as for this Russian student, the Kingdom *has come*—persons who in this complex and difficult world are minded to practice love, intelligently applied, as a way of life.

It must not for a moment be supposed that war is the only form of evil which is inconsistent with the spirit of the Kingdom. It happens at this crisis that war stands out in all its horror as a violation of the way of

love. But we cannot stop the ministry of reconciliation until we have applied the remedial force of love to every feature of the social life which works wrong and injustice to any of our fellow men, or to any groups of them anywhere.

There is, however, nothing in the proper sense of the word unpractical about this way of life, nor is it in any way an irrational course of action. On the contrary, it proves to be both practical and highly rational. There is no essential conflict between the method of love and the use of force, so long as force is used as discipline and not as destruction. The real problem is to discover where to mark the limits of force. The early stages of moral discipline, both in the history of the child and of the race, prove beyond any question that restraints and constraints play a great role in the formative process of fixing and settling the distinction between right and wrong, goodness and badness. Nature herself has a forceful way of driving into the consciousness of youthful learners her preferences in the matter of conduct and she has a sphinx-like way of telling her children that the way of the transgressor is not only

hard, but impossible. Nature's method is tremendously effective, but it is slow and the lesson is often long-delayed. Society does not wait for the slow sequences of natural processes. Parents and moral guardians anticipate results and, drawing from the experience of the race, they apply artificial restraints and constraints and so save the learner many bitter lessons. But no wise guardian supposes that the work of moralizing can be carried very far by methods of force and constraint. Higher agencies must come into operation before the goal is reached. Remarkable results have already been attained in all educational work by the substitution of the moral and psychological appeal for the use of force, and still more impressive is the transformation that has been wrought in penal institutions by the introduction of higher agencies in the place of force, for correcting, reforming, and redeeming those who have gone seriously astray. The world has only begun to realize the immense effectiveness of love and consecration even with the criminal classes, and great results will follow their enlarged and improved application.

So, too, it must be admitted that some of

the civilizing work of the world has been done in the earlier stages by methods of conflict and warfare. Fighting is no doubt a primitive instinct, and instinct can be trusted to steer beings until there is more adequate light to steer by. There have been wars which left men further on at the end than at the beginning, though it would be difficult to prove that it was the military method or the successful homicide that secured the advantage. Certain desirable qualities have no doubt been stimulated by war at its best, though even here it was the moral issue—the appeal of the ideal—rather than the killing, that called forth the heroic virtues and the admirable traits.

But even if we could grant all that can be claimed of fruitful results from this ancient method of instinct, what a price is paid for it! Charles Lamb has told in his humorous essay how the men in China got their roast pig. Through an accidental fire a Chinese chanced to discover how very good to eat was the pig which the fire had caught in its flames and roasted to a crisp. Knowing no other method, he and the other Chinese, who had learned the taste, proceeded to burn down their houses whenever they

wanted roast pig. The method of war is a similar kind of economy. It burns down the house and the town, lays waste the land, mortgages the resources of the future, kills the finest physical specimens of the nation, and tears with its merciless plowshare through the homes and hearts of the combatants on both sides, in order to get results which could always be better secured by Christian methods even though they are slow, as are all rational, moral, and educative methods. Other agencies, higher methods, are now available. The old way is antiquated and out-dated, and morally condemned. Truth and righteousness have now found other defenses than the ægis of the strong arm. They are no longer at the mercy of blind instinct. While instinct was in full operation, and before reflection and conscience arose, there was naturally no sense of condemnation. The bee is not conscious of wrongdoing in appropriating honey from clover which belongs to another. But as soon as the incomparable worth and sanctity of personality become clear, as soon as the meaning of social relationship and corporate life is attained, as soon as the majesty and power of love have been

proved, the destructive method of war seems then to the awakened conscience inherently an evil way, not to be sanctioned or endured. War now stands out in irreconcilable conflict with the spirit of love and with the central principle of the Kingdom of God, to which the highest loyalty is due. There cannot be any occasion that warrants the suspension of the higher way, now that it has been discovered and its power revealed. Love cannot deny its own nature, and sanction the way of hate and rapine. It must continue, however dark the hour, however extreme the crisis, to hope all things, to believe all things, and, if necessary, to endure all things. It is, nevertheless, no soft and acquiescent attitude. It does not surrender with free hands the reins to the capricious will of evil men. There is always a majesty attaching to determined moral goodness. Love in this wide and deep social and corporate meaning is power and not weakness. It will flame forth in moral indignation when injustice threatens. It will register its voice and vote for righteousness with no uncertain sound. It can speak and act with a force quite as effective as that of guns. It is

possible to be militant with other weapons than guns and swords. There are other paths to victory besides those of destruction and death. It is not inconsistent with the spirit of love to employ in behalf of truth and goodness the mightiest forces in the universe, so long as they are forces adapted to the constructive purposes of love.

In a world diverse as ours is there will naturally be at any one stage of history a strange mingling of the old way and the new way, of the past and the future, of exponents of force and exponents of love. The way of the Kingdom is not set up by miracle. It "comes" by the slow triumph of one type of life over other types. Those who have been awakened and who see the vision are called to live in this unfinished world by laws and principles which are only partially and feebly recognized. It requires courage and it demands high faith. But the way to make laws and principles spread and grow and prevail is to acknowledge them as true, to accept them as the way of life, and to carry them, as far as can be done, into operation in the complex affairs of daily life. There is no clearer call, or more rational appeal, or higher loyalty than

those which rise out of the fellowship with Christ, and, cost what they may, there is no nobler venture than to obey the call, to answer the appeal, to live by this loyalty.

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The following is a brief list of books dealing with some fundamental aspects of Christianity and its application to practical affairs. These books can be ordered from Association Press, 124 East 28th Street, New York City.


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Christ and Peace. Essays by various authors. Headley Bros. 35 cents.

The Venturer. A monthly journal of Christian Thought and Practice. Headley Bros. $1.00 per year. Subscriptions may be sent to Association Press.

The Social Principles of Jesus. By Walter Rauschenbusch. A Course of Daily Studies. Association Press. 50 cents.

Personal Economy and Social Reform. By H. G. Wood, M.A. Association Press. 50 cents.

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